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Copy 10 of 10

MEMORANDUM FOR : Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT : Failure of CORONA Mission 9052

1. The Agena vehicle launched on 28 February did not reach orbit due to failure of one of the three solid rocket assist boosters to ignite. This failure has been traced to a defective electrical connector plug which left open the circuits for ignition, separation, and telemetry from that particular rocket. This was the first test of the Thrust Augmented Thor configuration in the CORONA program.

2. The next launch of a MURAL payload had been scheduled for 24 March. Immediately after the failure of mission 9052 the possibility of launching sooner was looked into. Work on launch pad and the Agena vehicle are pacing items, but a launch between 18-21 March is possible.

3. The electrical circuits and components are being re-examined and additional redundancy is being added to check-out procedures to prevent malfunctions of the sort encountered in mission 9052.

4. Flight tests of the TAT booster are needed to prove its reliability since this configuration is necessary to launch the MURAL-J (dual recovery) payload. If TAT reliability is not satisfactory by 1 May, the decision can be made then to revert to single recovery MURAL payloads and Thor boosters. Two LANTARD and one MURAL payloads are scheduled on TAT boosters before 1 May. The TAT booster for the MURAL payload could be converted back to basic Thor if so decided on 1 April for launch as scheduled on 22 April.

EDWARD B. GILLER
Acting Deputy Director
(Research)

cc: DDCI

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NRO Review Completed

Signature Recommended:

(Signed) Jack C. Ledford

JACK C. LEDFORD
COLONEL, USAF
Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

Eugene P. Kiefer:TAES/OSA:hmj (4 March 1963)

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